ENGRAVING FOR ILLUSTRATION

JOSEPH KIRKBRIDE

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FRONTISPIECE. ENGRAVING FOR ILLUSTRATION.

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Historical and Practical Notes

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REPRODUCTION BY R. J.

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WITH TWO PLATES BY INK PHOTO PROCESS
AND SIX ILLUSTRATIONS

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PREFACE

A PHILOSOPHER and writer has declared that "in our fine arts, not imitation, but creation, is the aim."

It is to emphasise a distinction between an imitative and a creative art that the following chapters are offered.

"Engraving for Illustration" is pre-eminently a creative art by which the work of the artist is *translated*, "in order to render the effect of his design in such a form as will admit of rapid and effective reproduction."

It is, moreover, a popular art with a well-defined educative principle underlying the numerous phases of its manifestation; while, at the same time, its historical and general interest will commend this brief record of its progress and influence to many who are lovers of art for art's sake.

J. K.

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ENGRAVING FOR ILLUSTRATION

CHAPTER I

ITS INCEPTION—A THEORY OF EVOLUTION—
A DISTINCT PROGRESS

"In proportion to his force the artist will find in his work an outlet for his proper character."—EMERSON.

Its Inception.—It was the dawn of a new sense when primitive man first ornamented his weapons, utensils, and the walls of his cave dwellings with incised drawings,—pictorial representations which enabled him to record events or suggest and illustrate thoughts and ideas when his somewhat limited vocabulary failed him.

It was a severely utilitarian epoch of the world's history, and the crude yet intensely realistic manifestations of man's artistic desires were the more remarkable that they were wholly dependent upon stern necessity for their realisation. Childlike in their simplicity, yet both graphic and vigorous in expression, these ancient drawings bear testimony

to the intense desire of primeval man for some suitable and satisfying form of pictorial expression. Such incised drawings were undoubtedly the earliest forms, which the mind of man suggested and his skill attained, of conveying information and displaying pictorial or ornamental art. They were but crude conceptions of the untutored art of a savage race, yet, with a characteristic quaintness of expression, they abundantly prove the existence of an innate, imitative, and artistic faculty, inspired by an insatiable craving for illustrative delineation.

A Theory of Evolution.—The antiquity of the engraver's art, then, is exceedingly remote, and its earliest records display frequent evidences of manipulative skill and artistic perception—evidences which are still more convincing when the environment and scanty resources of its exponents are fully appreciated. It was a most unique phase of that process of evolution whereby the social education of the human race was advanced, and through countless ages it has indicated the same onward roll of progressive intelligence.

Responsive to the ever-changing conditions of life, the necessities of mankind were constantly increasing. His higher intelligence also created a greater diversity of interests, and consequently demanded a fuller and more expressive vehicle of communication for his thoughts. No longer content with what was only needful for the maintenance of social or commercial intercourse, he sought to add to the archaic simplicity of his drawings,

skilful arrangement, and a certain degree of artistic feeling and interpretation. It was as though some transitory flashes of artistic power in the minds of prehistoric artists were struggling with an inability to give adequate expression to their inceptions. Their productions, some of them dating from the Palæolithic and Neolithic periods, were not pretentious works of art. Their primary purpose being representative, their merit was, of course, decided by the success or failure of such representation, apart from any artistic qualities they might possess.

A Distinct Purpose.—The evident care with which many of the ancient incised drawings or engravings were executed and preserved, together with the permanent character of the materials employed, seems to indicate that these simple yet graphic representations were produced with the distinct purpose of perpetuating a memory as well as for the amplification of a meagre language,—a purpose which considerably enhances their interest, and suggests that the primeval engraver appreciated some at least of the possibilities of his art. Moreover, they frequently possess an intense veracity and directness of imitation which renders them of inestimable value as reliable historical records. Had caprice alone directed the artist's efforts, they would not in so many instances have merited the interest and approval which they now receive.

Such, then, were the beginnings of an art that

subsequently reached its maturity only by a slow growth of gradual development, and "which, in the modesty and seriousness of its earlier manifestations, is at least as interesting as in the audacity of its later and more impressionistic phases."

Engraving as a reproductive as well as an ornamental art was at different periods modified in accordance with ever-changing conditions produced by the exigencies of national and industrial policy. Its frequent adaptation to the various circumstances with which it was indissolubly associated, and the fluctuations of an enthusiasm which was more or less dependent upon national as well as social prosperity, fully justifies the statement that "its history is the mirror of a nation's progress."

The rude methods of ancient artists can be distinctly traced through Egyptian, Assyrian, and Grecian history. Hieroglyphic and symbolic figures, engraved on ancient Egyptian monuments, bear testimony to a vast progress both in expressive and inventive power. Assyrian antiquities disclose an art which is even more suggestive and picturesque, while the ancient Greeks developed the highest qualities of pictorial power, and raised the art to a marvellous pitch of excellence.

Beyond this brief epitome of the early history of engraving we need not venture. The idea of taking impressions from any form of incised drawings was not suggested until many centuries later.

CHAPTER II

WOOD ENGRAVING—RISE AND PROGRESS — BLOCK BOOKS—DURER'S INFLUENCE—HANS HOLBEIN—A RENAISSANCE—COMPARISON AND JUSTIFICATION—THE ILLUSTRATOR

"It is therefore beautiful because it is alive, moving, reproductive. It is therefore useful because it is symmetrical and fair."—EMERSON.

Wood Engraving. — The most animating event in the whole history of engraving was the development of engraved wood blocks. Wood engraving did not receive the impetus of a new discovery as did metal engraving at a later period. It was to some extent a purely commercial enterprise, the success of which was assured by an ever increasing interest in pictorial art. Engraved wood blocks were used for purposes of reproduction several centuries before their introduction into Europe. Historians claim that it can be traced back to A.D. 930, when a form of playing card was known to the Chinese, and printed by them from rough wood engravings. The commercial intercourse of the Venetians with Eastern nations would suggest a probability that their navigators brought home

some of these playing cards, and described the method of their production to their countrymen.

The further we pursue our investigations, the more remarkable does this tardy recognition of the utility of wood engraving appear to be. It is true that somewhere about the middle of the thirteenth century legal documents were stamped, and merchant marks made with engraved wood blocks, but no extensive use was made of this method of reproduction until a much later period.

The Low Countries claim credit for the first employment of engraved wood blocks for commercial purposes. Many dispute this claim, but the amount of credit at stake is so infinitesimal that it renders the contention of little value. Until the time of that immense progress which wood engraving made in Germany about the middle and towards the end of the fifteenth century, no work of any artistic merit whatever had been produced. The older prints may possess a certain historical or antiquarian value, but otherwise are both crude and uninteresting.

Block Books.—The Mediæval Block Books were the most important of the early pictorial reproductions from engraved wood blocks. They also may be traced to China, where, as early as the ninth century, they were used for decorative as well as illustrative purposes. They retained their primitive form for a long period after their first introduction to Western civilisation, and it is interesting to note that the blocks, and not the prints, were supplied to the

monks,—the scholars of the day,—the impressions being made by them as required. Towards the end of the fourteenth century Dutch merchants, like the Venetians, paid frequent visits to Chinese ports, when they too were impressed with the novelty and utility of pictorial reproduction as practised in the East. At anyrate, pictorial sheets or cards, very similar in character to the Chinese playing cards, were published in Holland about that period. They bore pictures of the saints with the titles or legends engraved alongside. The production of such prints was evidently a recognised business during the early part of the fifteenth century, for there are numerous entries in the civic records of Nuremberg concerning the wood engraver "Formschneider" and cardmaker "Kartenmacher." It has been ingenuously suggested that, for convenience, collections of these cards were pasted into books; and the books available being chiefly of a religious character, the idea of illustrating religious matter with such pictures was readily suggested.

The next step was the application of block engraving and printing to the production of volumes of a more pretentious character, the most noteworthy of which were *The Apocalypsio sue Historia Sancti Johannis*, the *Biblia Pauperum*, and the *Historia Virginis ex Cantico Canticorum*. In another of these books, the *Speculum Humanæ Salvationis*, the titles were not engraved on the plates, but were printed with movable types. This volume was published at Haarlem, and was composed of fifty-

eight plates—a very considerable production with the materials then at the disposal of the publishers.

Durer's Influence. — In 1490 Albert Durer, who possessed a spirited imagination and deep enthusiasm for his work, marked out a distinct era of substantial progress, and impressed the art of wood engraving with that expressive power of delineation which his truly remarkable genius ever manifested.

Durer was an artist of somewhat variable characteristics, but the diversity and amplitude of his productions afford conclusive evidences of a remarkable industry and skill.

Like other artists of his time, and even of much later periods, he did not engrave his own drawings. He may, of course, have engraved a few blocks, but most, if not all of the wood engravings signed by Durer, were executed by Jerome Rock.

Perhaps the most peculiar characteristic of Durer's designs was the portrayal of scenes and figures of ancient history and myth in well-defined imitation of his own surroundings and the conditions of life then existing. Apropos of this, it was said that he turned the New Testament into the history of a Flemish village.

Hans Holbein was another of the early artists who prepared their drawings for the express purpose of reproduction by means of wood engraving. That he fully appreciated the resources of his art there can be no doubt, for he imbued his work with an expressive individual force which was distinctly progressive and influential. His best known pro-

duction consists of forty-one engravings representing "Death—the King of Terrors," in association with nearly every phase of human life. Each one of these designs is a picture parable of remarkable power and suggestiveness. The characteristic drawing and quaint expressiveness of Holbein's illustrations merit unqualified admiration, and his graphic use of pure line for pictorial expression stands almost unrivalled.

Hans Litzelburger engraved Holbein's designs. Towards the end of the fifteenth and during part of the sixteenth centuries wood engraving still received enthusiastic attention, and then, for sheer lack of interest, fell rapidly into decay. Metal engraving was absorbing the attention of the artistic world, and for many years wood engraving was regarded as only fit for the reproduction of pictures which may be charitably described as inartistic, and too often perhaps discreditable.

As far as our own country was concerned, it was not until the advent of Thomas Bewick that this decadence received any effective check.

A Renaissance.—The Renaissance of wood engraving in England may be dated from 1775, when Bewick engraved a picture entitled "The Hound," and received a prize offered by the Royal Society for the best engraving on wood. Thomas Bewick was born in 1753, and fourteen years later he was apprenticed to a metal engraver. It was indeed a fortuitous circumstance which caused him to transfer his energies and his talents to wood engraving, in

which he displayed a rare skill and inimitable directness of expression. He was probably the first wood engraver to adopt level tinting in place of complicated and laborious cross hatching which was then practised by his continental contemporaries. He usually preferred to develop his drawing rather than attempt the production of extraneous effects, and the subtle effectiveness of his pictures affords incontrovertible proofs of the advantage of such substitution. Their humour and pathos, vigour and fidelity, remain to this day as memorials of the consummate, artistic skill and perceptive capacity of a truly remarkable man. Bewick was a self-contained genius whose rugged emotions would admit of but one form of pictorial expression, and that peculiarly his own. His work was pregnant with masterly good sense, and ever manifested a charming simplicity of purpose. He had but a modest estimate of his ability as an engraver, and consequently rarely engraved any other than his own drawings.

The exact measure of Bewick's influence on the art of wood engraving for pictorial illustration and reproduction would be difficult to satisfactorily determine. This much is certain, however, that through it wood engraving was verified and popularised, and illustrated literature received a stimulus which subsequent developments combined to maintain and emphasise.

A Comparison. — There is a vast difference between the effects procurable in an impression

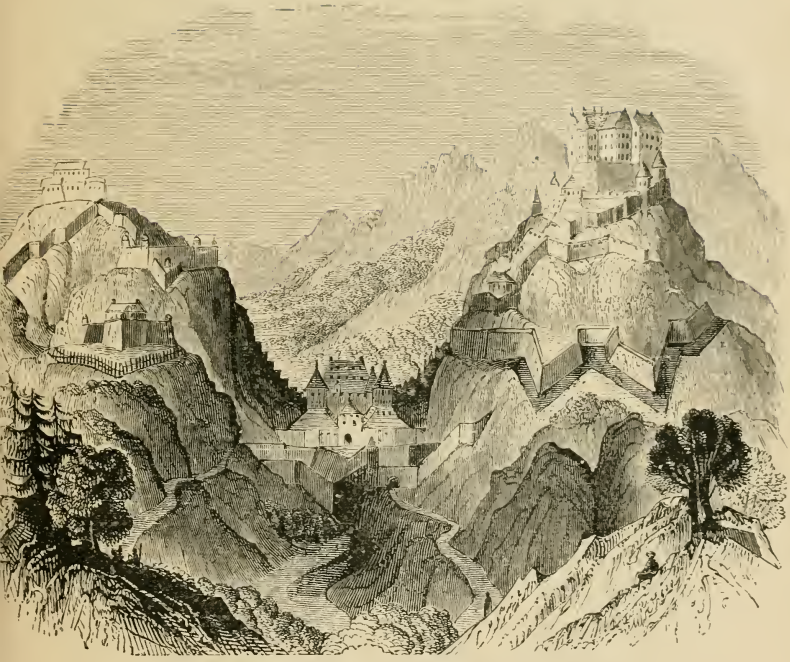

Fig. 1.—Old Wood Engraving (Erenburg Castle).

"Colour values and perspective can only be expressed by thick and thin lines at varying distances apart."

ock supplied by the London Electrotype Agency Ltd., from the "Illustrated London News."

from a wood engraving and the print from an engraved metal plate. In the former, colour values and perspective can only be expressed by thick and thin lines at varying distances apart, the ink on the prints being of the same density throughout, no matter how thick or thin the lines may be. In metal engraving intermediary values may be obtained by lines of the same thickness, if need be, but of varying depth. The result is a strong, intense effect produced by the greater body of pigment held by such portions of the lines as are cut deeply, and the comparatively grey appearance of the shallower parts. It is largely due to this that prints from engraved metal plates possess a peculiar richness and depth of tone.

The commercial advantages generally claimed for engraved wood blocks are the ease and rapidity with which impressions can be made from them as compared with the metal plates, and also the fact that they can be printed with type, *i.e.* letterpress, without any unusual preparations. Granting the validity of these claims, it must follow that, owing to the larger number of impressions made from wood engravings, their intrinsic worth will be correspondingly less than the limited number of prints made from engraved metal plates, and their commercial value will be estimated accordingly.

A Justification.—The somewhat sweeping assertion that wood engraving affords a medium of expression only for the blunter minds is not the whole truth. Its strikingly bold conceptions and broad expressive

effects certainly appeal to the untrained eye or untutored mind more than the artistic qualities of design and execution displayed in metal engraving; but there is yet in the art of the wood engraver a well-nigh inexhaustible store of artistic as well as pictorial effects. The forcible character and charm of its productions are chiefly due to the disposition and combination of the lines employed, and a variety of texture which is thereby introduced. It affords also an exceptional facility of execution, and an almost limitless power of realisation, which gives to it a deservedly high place among the pictorial and reproductive arts. The whole matter may be summed up in a statement once made by a well-known artist and illustrator: "There is no process in relief which has the same certainty, which gives the same colour and brightness, and by which gradations of touch can be more truly rendered. Few of our great artists, however, can be prevailed upon to draw for wood engraving, and when they do undertake an illustration, say of a great poem, the drawing, which has to be multiplied 100,000 times, has less thought bestowed upon it than the painted portrait of a cotton king." What wonder, then, at the retrogression of this facile and graphic art of pictorial illustration.

The Illustrator. — The employment of wood engravings in conjunction with literature created a new phase of artistic work. The task of the illustrator or designer is peculiar. He sketches out his design on the wood block, and then passes

Fig. 2.—Modern Wood Engraving (the Goose Fountain, Nuremburg).

"The forcible character of wood engraving chiefly due to the disposition and combination of the lines employed."

Block supplied by the London Electrotype Agency Ltd., from the "Religious Tract Society."

it on to the engraver. His drawing is not intended as a permament form of pictorial art, but as a suggestive sketch, which, while perfectly intelligible to the engraver, will be free from such intricacies in its composition as might interfere with its effective interpretation. The old wood engravers produced, line for line, an exact facsimile of the artist's design. His work, no doubt, required considerable skill and unremitting patience, but it was almost devoid of independent thought or artistic feeling. The engraver to-day must *translate* the work of the illustrator so as to render the effect of his design in such a form as will admit of rapid and effective reproduction. The possibilities of the wood engraver's art, therefore, are manifold. The artist's sketch may give a suggestion of light and shade, and possibly some idea of its tone. The execution and elaboration of the drawing is left almost entirely in the hands of the engraver. Whether it will gain or lose by its translation will, to some extent, depend upon his artistic perception as well as his manipulative skill.

CHAPTER III

METAL ENGRAVING—THE INVENTION—EARLY ENGRAVERS—NATIONAL CHARACTERISTICS—A PROGRESSIVE REVIEW

"The influence of the graver is so great and extensive that its productions have constantly been the delight of all countries of the world and of all seasons of life."

Metal Engraving—The Invention.—The engraving of metal plates for pictorial reproduction was a direct development of ornamental engraving. The Italian Niello work of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries was chiefly applied to the embellishment of metal ornaments and utensils with elaborate engravings. To intensify their effect, the designs were filled in with a black pigment known as *Niello*, L. *Nigellus*—Black. Hence the name by which the process was generally known. Niello work was practised chiefly by gold and silversmiths, and it is recorded that one of these, Finiguerra by name, was filling up the lines of the engraving with black composition in the usual way when he accidentally spilled some hot wax over the plate. It rapidly cooled and hardened, and on scaling off bore a distinct black impression

of the engraving. Quick to perceive the importance of his discovery, Finiguerra promoted a few experiments which ultimately led to a full realisation of his hopes. There is yet another account of the metamorphosis of metal engraving which, if true, reflects much more credit upon Finiguerra than the accidental discovery already described. To obtain a *proof* of their work, the Florentine metal-workers covered the ornamentation with some fine plastic material. It was then a simple matter to convert the impression into a mould, which they filled with melted sulphur. The casts, when hard, formed exact replicas of the engravings, and afterwards, when the incised lines were filled with a black pigment, probably Niello, they presented an effective record of the original work. It is not by any means improbable that Finiguerra made his discovery when making such a cast.

It is a noteworthy fact that the idea of producing impressions from engraved metal plates was not, as might readily be imagined, a development of wood engraving or of the then well-known method of printing from engraved wood blocks. It was a fortuitous discovery, and probably the direct result of an accident. The true importance of this transition, *i.e.* Niello work to engraving as a reproductive art, is seldom fully appreciated. It was a momentous change, bristling with possibilities, which subsequent developments amply proved. The time was peculiarly propitious. The beneficent influence of the Renaissance was at its flood, and

a feverish spirit of progress swept over Europe. The imitative instinct inherent in mankind re-asserted itself with an irresistible intensity, and new forms of pictorial expression were eagerly sought after. The art of engraving provided a medium for the extension of the artist's fame and the popularising of his creations. It rapidly gained favour, and its ultimate development and expansion fully justified the interest it aroused.

Early Engravers.—Baccio Baldine, another Florentine goldsmith, quickly realised the value of Finiguerra's discovery, and endeavoured to produce engraved plates for printing purposes. Being a somewhat indifferent designer, his first efforts were not very successful. He was afterwards assisted by Sandio Botticelli, and this partnership was the first clear indication of progress in the art. These two engravers undertook the illustration of an edition of Dante's works, in which the chief feature was to be an original headpiece for each canto. They accomplished some meritorious work in connection therewith, but never quite fulfilled their task.

Some impressions from engraved plates were exhibited in Rome about this time, and attracted the attention of the painter Andrea Mantegna. He was so impressed with these examples of the new art that he determined to reproduce some of his own pictures in a like manner. Mantegna's engravings were not in any way remarkable, yet they were received with considerable enthusiasm

by his countrymen and by artists in various parts of Europe.

Marc Antonio Raimondi was another famous Italian engraver of this period. He first became notorious through copying some of A. Durer's designs in the exact style affected by that great artist. He also added Durer's signature to his piracies, and in other ways emphasised the imitation.

It is doubtful whether he ever realised the gravity of the deception he was guilty of, for he took no pains to conceal the fact from his fellow artists. Apart from this, however, Raimondi was a fine engraver. He reproduced a number of Raphael's pictures under that artist's direct supervision, all of which show distinct traces of the great master's influence. Raimondi engraved between three and four hundred plates.

It is a remarkable coincidence that the art of engraving in Italy, and printing in Germany, should each receive the stimulus of a new discovery about the same period. The art of printing was known to the ancient Chinese, but movable types were first used by Gutenberg about 1454.

National Characteristics.—Engraving is almost as old as the human race, yet its full value as a reproductive art was not discovered until 1452, when Finiguerra made his discovery. For at least half a century after this discovery engraving was held in the highest esteem in Italy. From that country it passed to Germany, and thence into

France. In each of these countries it flourished for a time, until at last it claimed a place, and that a high one, amongst the fine arts of our own country.

The leading characteristics of Italian art, and particularly Italian engraving, were beautiful outlines and excellent drawing. "Nothing in any stage of Italian art was carelessly or incompletely done. There is no rough suggestion of design, no inexact record of artistic invention." The lines, and especially the outlines, of the early Italian engravings are indisputably exquisite in their expression of grace and beauty, though perhaps weak and unsuitable for the portrayal of vigour and strength.

The German engravers reached another extreme. Their drawings were frequently deficient, and even grotesque; but this was more than compensated for by a mingled force and freedom of delineation which, added to a rich imaginative symbolism, was in every respect remarkable. By means of flowing lines they indicated every fold of draperies, emphasised the varied contour of features, or produced an intricate and almost perplexing perspective in their pictures. They frequently sacrificed artistic power for a mere show of dexterous execution, and consequently the engravings of this period were rarely ever sublime in their conceptions. Remarkable for their technique, they were yet productive of a bewildering confusion of ideas and mannerisms. It was undoubtedly this superiority

of technique which attracted so much attention to the old German engravers. Their portrait engravings display abundant insight into human character, and in this respect at least exhibit a rare power of pictorial expression. Indefatigable enthusiasm, one of the racial characteristics of the French nation, was exemplified in the reception accorded by her artists to the art of metal engraving. French engraving was distinguished by a felicitous combination of good drawing, skilful execution, and "an aptitude to imitate easily any impression." Outlines were frequently suggested rather than delineated, and although somewhat unconventional in style, French engravings of the seventeenth century displayed few traces of a perfunctory art. Certain vagaries of style, due no doubt to a natural vivacity, indicated an artistic quality of design and execution which was their peculiar inheritance. Of modern French engravers on metal, the Audran family were by far the most notable. For four or five generations that remarkable family showed artistic talent of a high standard of excellence. Gerard Audran, who was born in 1640, was the best known and most gifted member of this family. His productions were everywhere admired. His historical pictures especially were very fine. He was appointed engraver to Louis XIV. Died 1703.

A Progressive Review.—For a long period engraving was of the simplest possible character. About the beginning of the sixteenth century an

effort was made to introduce perspective into the productions of both brush and graver, and until this important development obtained complete recognition, even the most skilful artists were guilty of faulty draughtsmanship. Aërial perspective, or the suggestion of distance, quickly followed this adoption of linear perspective. It is claimed for Lucas van Leyden, a Dutch engraver, that he was the first to thoroughly appreciate and give true value to foreground and distance; in other words, to fully recognise the artistic value of perspective.

It has been frequently suggested that the fame of Durer, van Leyden, and others of the same school, was so widespread as to create an artistic bias, which other engravers, who were their equals in technical skill, if not in fertility of design, found it difficult to overcome. One of these engravers, Henry Goltzius, was determined to obtain recognition of his merits, and engraved five plates in as many different styles, copying the mannerisms and artifices of Durer and others. They were at once accepted as productions of the great artists, and not until Goltzius had heard the unqualified praise of art critics and patrons did he reveal his purpose. His countrymen generously forgave him this deception, and he certainly gained much credit thereby. These pictures are now known as Goltzius' masterpieces.

During the seventeenth century Rembrandt's influence developed much of that technique which

modern engravers have copied, and in some instances claimed to improve. He is also credited with the introduction of more expressive gradations of tone, for the production and emphatic suggestion of light and shade. The character of this, too, has been retained in present day engravings. Rembrandt was more directly associated with etching than with line engraving, but his influence was far from exclusive. Encouraged by the influence of his example, the line engraver endeavoured to add to the expressive power of his pictures by the introduction of more daring perspectives, more suggestive form, and infinitely greater diversity of texture.

CHAPTER IV

ENGRAVING IN ENGLAND—INTRODUCTION OF METAL ENGRAVING—NOTABLE BRITISH ENGRAVERS—SUMMARY

"When applied to objects of their proper destination, the arts are capable of extending our intellect, of supplying new ideas, and of presenting to us a view of times and places, whatever their interval or difference."—DALLAWAY.

ENGRAVING as a decorative art was well advanced in this country during the reign of Alfred the Great, when the Anglo-Saxon metal-workers were known to be skilful engravers. The art was still further developed under the Norman rule, and during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

Wood engravings were printed by William Caxton in 1481, but there is no proof that they were the work of English engravers.

Introduction of Metal Engraving.—The exact date of the introduction into England of metal engraving as a reproductive art is doubtful. There is a record of a book published in this country in 1545, which was illustrated with copper engravings, cut by Thomas Gemeni. It was a work on anatomy by Vesalius, and was at first printed

in Latin. In the preface to a translation of this work the following quaint note appears: "Accepte, jentill reader, this Tractise of Anatomie, thankfully interpreting the labours of Thomas Gemeni the workman. He that with his great charge, watch and travayle, hath set out the figures in pourtrature will most willingly be amended, or better perfected of his own workmanship if admonished."

It was probably not until Queen Elizabeth's reign was well advanced that metal engraving obtained any substantial recognition as a fine art which might be practised with some hope of commercial success.

Archbishop Parker, a powerful prelate of this time, extended his patronage to the art, and for a time, at least, kept a private staff of engravers. A portrait of this archbishop was executed by Remigus Hogenberg, and is the first record of an engraved portrait produced and printed in England.

For about a century the work of English engravers was uninteresting, and almost devoid of artistic feeling. Their pictures possessed but little merit, either as works of art or as pictorial records of that eminently progressive period.

During the seventeenth century engraving became intimately associated with literature, and then, as now, the combination was a felicitous one. Another fortunate circumstance was the settling of the Passe family in this country. They came from Utrecht, and were engravers of considerable skill and repute. The elder Passe was a friend

and admirer of the famous painter Reubens, whose style he, to some extent, copied.

John Payne — the first English artist to distinguish himself with the graver—was a pupil of Passe. Payne was an undoubted genius, and, but for his indolence and dissipated habits, might have accomplished a great work.

His most noteworthy engraving was a picture of "The Royal Sovereign," made on two plates, which, when joined together, measured 36 in. × 26 in.

Vertue succeeded Payne. His engravings were chiefly of historical value; as works of art they displayed no unusual merit. Many were portraits of personages of high degree, in which Vertue evidently copied the style of Houbraken, a Dutch artist, who some time previously engraved a similar series of portraits, the commission being given to him because "*no English engraver was capable of executing it.*"

Vertue's writings on English Art were profuse and thoughtful. They were afterwards collected and published by Horace Walpole.

Hogarth, "The inimitable Hogarth,"

> "Whose pictured morals charm the eye,
> And through the eye correct the heart,"

was a brilliant exponent of the expressive power of the engraver's art. Possessing a profound knowledge of human nature, and a keen sense of all that is humanely interesting, he expressed in his pictures a wonderful creative fancy, and a well directed

FIG. 3.—Old Wood Engraving.

"Horace Walpole, the historian of the graphic arts."

Block supplied by the London Electrotype Agency Ltd., from the "Illustrated London News."

humour. He almost invariably represented character rather than scenes, and while displaying immense fertility of design, he retained sufficient realism in the composition of his pictures to render them valuable as records of the manners and customs of his times. They, moreover, describe their incidents in the most direct and piquant fashion. His somewhat defective drawing was redeemed by a wealth of suggestion and an endless variety of grotesque conceptions. He possessed the happy art of seizing a fleeting impression from which he would evolve a caricature full of peculiar and quaint humour. Hogarth's place in the art annals of this country is undoubtedly assured, for it has been said that he *represented* his characters with more force than most men could *see* them. His career may be dated from 1724, when he produced the illustrations for *Hudibras* and *La Mortray's Travels.*

There is a most extraordinary story related in connection with Hogarth's last engraving. While spending a merry evening with some friends he was heard to say: "My next undertaking will be *the end of all things.*" "If that is so," remarked one of his companions, "there will soon be an end of the artist." "Yes, there will be," Hogarth replied, "and the sooner my task is finished the better." The engraving was executed under the impulse of an intense excitement. "Finis," he exclaimed, as he finished that most remarkable design, "All is now over," and, strange to relate, this was actu-

ally his last work, for he died about a month later.

Robert Strange, who was contemporary with Hogarth, was a native of the Orkney Islands. He was an art student in Edinburgh when Prince Charlie landed, and his Jacobite sympathies led him to throw aside his work and join the young chevalier. When the remnant of the army of 1745 was flying before Duke William after the battle of Culloden, Strange, closely pursued by a number of soldiers, sought shelter in the house of the Lumsdales. Miss Lumsdale was sitting with her work by one of the windows, and at once offered to conceal the young soldier underneath the folds of her skirt. Ladies' skirts of the crinoline period were of such proportions as to render the concealment easy, and Miss Lumsdale, to lull the suspicions of the pursuing soldiers, continued her sewing, and affected considerable surprise and indignation at their intrusion. They shamefacedly withdrew upon finding the lady alone, and Strange afterwards made good his escape to France. Gratitude to his deliverer, intensified by the romantic situation which saved his life, quickly ripened into love, and, it is needless to add, a good old-fashioned love match.

Strange settled in London about 1750, when, by his zeal and skilful work, he added much to the fame of historical engraving in this country. He engraved over eighty plates during his lifetime, and displayed a literary talent of no mean order. He

was not a brilliant draughtsman, but the tone and texture of his engravings are almost perfect.

He was knighted in 1781.

There is yet one other engraver of this period whose career merits a share of attention and interest.

James Gilray was born in 1757, and, like Hogarth, commenced at the bottom rung of the ladder as a letter engraver. He also became a notable caricaturist, and some idea of his skill in this branch of pictorial art may be gleaned from the fact that over 1200 designs were the product of his inventive fancy. Though not by any means indolent, his habits were dissipated, and unfortunately for him he, for many years, resided with his publisher, who gratified his passions so long as his art was sufficiently productive. Gilray's designs were not all caricatures. A number of illustrations for Goldsmith's *Deserted Village* were designed and engraved by him. He also engraved a few of Northcote's pictures. His style was free and spirited, and he was one of the first English engravers to prove the merits of stipple engraving.

The stipple manner of engraving was a curious development of the art. It appeared as though line engraving could not keep pace with the ever-growing demand for pictures, and was therefore combined with stipple to facilitate production. In capable hands very fine results were obtained with this combination.

English engraving was still in its infancy, however, and continental productions were favoured by

the art patrons of this country, until a stimulus was given to native art by the painters Reynolds, Wilson, and West. Profiting by this renewed interest, Woollet entered upon a career of unqualified success, and eventually succeeded in obtaining full recognition for the merits of English engraving.

As a boy Woollet showed his artistic proclivities in a strange manner. His father, it is stated, won a £5000 prize in a lottery, and bought an inn, glorying in the name of "The Turk's Head," a title which the embryonic artist endeavoured to express pictorially on a pewter pot. The father, struck by some quality in the drawing, apprenticed young Woollet to an obscure London engraver. From an artistic point of view this apprenticeship was of little value. Woollet was a born artist, and although his early training may have intensified the natural bent of his genius, it did little to cultivate it. He possessed versatile talents. His historical pictures were, in every respect, equal to his landscapes, and these will long remain as lasting and convincing monuments of his skill. The boldness of contrast and accuracy of execution displayed by Woollet in his landscape engravings far surpassed all previous efforts to express pictorial effects with the graver.

Raimbach was a miniature painter of some note, who, like many other artists, turned from creative to reproductive art, and became a successful engraver. In 1812 he became associated with

David Wilkie, and it is generally supposed that he was retained by that artist for the reproduction of his pictures. Raimbach's translations of Wilkie's works were in every sense artistic productions and faithful representations. He was said to be so careful and conscientious in his work that he employed no assistants, but this was not entirely true. Careful and conscientious he undoubtedly was, but he frequently employed assistants to engrave the less important parts of his commissions. Raimbach was born in 1776, and died 1843.

F. C. Lewis was a progressive engraver contemporary with Raimbach. His most notable productions were after Landseer and Lawrence. He was appointed engraver first to George IV., then William IV., and afterwards to Queen Victoria.

Samuel Cousins was another most influential engraver. A brief sketch of his artistic career is given in another chapter.

C. G. Lewis was both a line and mezzotint engraver. He was probably Landseer's favourite engraver, and his name is best known in association with that artist's pictures. Born 1808; died 1880.

When John Pye engraved his first Turner picture, "Pope's Villa," in 1811, that famous artist expressed his unqualified approval when he said, "If I had known there was anyone in this country who could have done that, I would have had it done before," and on more than one occasion he mentioned Pye's engravings as "the most satis-

factory translations of my colour into black and white." An adequate interpretation of Turner's pictures requires a masterly appreciation of the gradations and balance of tone which suggest both colour and space; and to merit such expressions of satisfaction from the great artist himself was proof of John Pye's artistic power and skill.

He began his career as an engraver about the year 1800 after a short apprenticeship with James Heath, a clever and practical man, who was quick to perceive the ability of his apprentice.

John Pye was a recognised authority on the pictorial effect of colour, and it was said that during his long and eminently useful life "no engraver did more than he to spread a knowledge of the sound principles of landscape art." He was frequently consulted by his fellow artists, and without even a suggestion of professional jealousy, he was ever ready with his advice and, if need be, practical help. The following copy of a letter—now in the Swansea Art Gallery—gives some idea of the esteem in which his opinion was held by contemporary artists:—

Monday.

To J. Pye, Esq.

Thursday night, at half-past five, if you please. I hope that day will be convenient to you. I should like, if possible, to see you here by daylight, as your opinion is always valuable to me, and I have some few things to show you.—Your faithful servant, ED. LANDSEER.

Pye was long known in art circles as the "Father of landscape engraving," and he certainly succeeded, as no other engraver has done, in his translation of colour values and suggestion of aërial perspectives. Turner's paintings were his favourite subjects, and his interpretations of them are brilliant in expression, and charged with the very essence of artistic feeling.

His life and work indicated a progress as distinct as it was far reaching.

> "And still the work went on,
> And on, and on, and is not yet completed.
> The generation that succeeds our own
> Perhaps may finish it."

It has been through the efforts of these men and others who, though less influential, were not less skilful perhaps, or less earnest, that English engraving, in its daring innovations and substantial improvements, has far outstripped that of other countries. By them its reputation has been built up and enhanced, so that "its influence is conspicuously visible in the principles and history of Art."

CHAPTER V

ETCHING — EARLY RECORDS — DESCRIPTIVE — REMBRANDT'S INFLUENCE — WENCESLAUS HOLLAR. *MEZZOTINT* — INVENTION — DESCRIPTION — ARTISTIC QUALITIES — DILETTANTI ART — A MODERN MEZZO ENGRAVER

"By its very character of freedom, by the intimate and rapid connection which it establishes between the hands and the thoughts of the artists, etching becomes the frankest and most natural of interpreters."—LALANNE.

IT has been asserted, and not without some show of reason, that of all the reproductive arts etching stands pre-eminent as a medium of pictorial expression wherein perfect freedom of drawing is retained. It has found considerable favour with artists, because it enables them to reproduce their own works with ease and rapidity, and without any perceptible loss of expressive power.

Early Records.—The first account of the art of etching comes from Dutch sources, but whether or not it had its birth in Holland is a matter of pure conjecture. It was certainly cradled in the Low Countries, and finding the time and conditions of art congenial there, flourished abundantly. A

book bearing the title, *A Book of Secrets*, was published in England in 1599. It was a translation from the Dutch, and described "A method of engraving with strong waters on steel or iron." The art of etching must have been known in Holland some time previous to the date of this publication.

It was an unfortunate tendency which led the early etchers, or at anyrate etchers of the latter part of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, to practise a style of execution in direct imitation of the work of the graver. Their productions were robbed of their peculiar character and charm, their directness and completeness of representation.

Descriptive.—The practical phase of the etcher's work claims a more than passing interest from the earnest reader. A carefully polished sheet of copper is covered with an acid resist in the form of a thin coating of wax or some similar composition. When this has been blackened by the smoke of a candle, or by any other suitable means, the drawing is made with steel points. The bright sheen of the copper exposed by each stroke of the point or etching needle will show the progress of the work very distinctly. The etching mordant is poured over the drawing thus made, when the exposed parts of the plate will be corroded or etched away until sufficient depth is obtained. These are, of course, but the bare outlines of the process, yet they will suffice to illustrate the facility and simplicity of its operations.

Because it is so admirably adapted for light and

sketchy drawings, etching has been described as a kind of summary of pictorial expression, and in some respects such a description fits it perfectly; yet, for a just appreciation of its merits, it will be needful to put aside the idea that it is little more than a sketchy framework. It is true that some of the finest etchings have been executed with the fewest possible lines and without any pretence of elaboration, yet tone and texture may be fully expressed though not actually realised. Hence the term sometimes so aptly applied to etching when it is referred to as "the stenography of artistic thought." It is upon this principle of limitation that the chief merits of the etcher's art rests,—a system of pictorial representation which does not always produce illogical and inartistic interpretation or the imperfect transcription of light and shade. It may be frequently characterised by a certain amount of caprice in its execution, but it is nevertheless capable of producing form and expression of a very high character. Albert Durer, who possessed a most remarkable artistic versatility, etched a number of plates; but they can scarcely be regarded as successful examples of his work, for, like other artists of his time, he endeavoured to imitate the productions of the graver with his etching needle. It was altogether a futile experiment, if indeed it can be regarded as an experiment, and Durer's etchings show but little of that rare power and technical skill for which he was justly famous in other phases of graphic art.

Rembrandt's Influence.—Rembrandt, who was said to be "The greatest artistic individuality of the seventeenth century," manifested a deep and lasting enthusiasm for the art of etching,—an enthusiasm which was abundantly displayed in the marvellous diversity of form by which he reproduced the characteristic grace and delicate modelling of his pictures. His graver and etching needle possessed the same spirited touch as his brush, and when "with his own hand he presented his bold principles of light and shade," he almost invariably combined strength of expression with great facility of invention.

There is one notable etcher whose chequered career may well be regarded with interest, for it reveals a depth of artistic enthusiasm almost unparalleled in the art annals of this or any other country.

Hollar.—Wenceslaus Hollar was a Bohemian by birth, and came to England under the patronage of the Duke of Arundel in 1637. During a lifetime of peculiar misfortunes and vicissitudes, he etched something like 2700 plates. As an ardent Royalist, he was drawn into the civil war of 1643–44. He also passed through the Great Plague and the Fire of London. Difficulties and hardships ever beset his path, yet his industry and fond attachment to art never flagged. The very fact that ever-recurring misfortunes and privations never impaired his power as a most remarkable and ingenious illustrator is ample proof, if such be required, of his genius. Hollar's etchings are

distinguished by an intense fidelity. They abound in historical interest of a reliable and fascinating kind, and though never showy they possess a wealth of artistic beauty and artistic expression. It is difficult to understand how an artist with Hollar's gigantic, productive energy should end his days in abject poverty.

Mezzotint engraving is the art of engraving on metal *in tones.* It dates back to about the middle of the seventeenth century. Its history is interesting if only for the fact that it has been developed chiefly in this country, the high degree of perfection to which it attained being chiefly due to English artists. So much so, indeed, that it has frequently been referred to as *la manaire Anglais.*

Invention.—The invention of Mezzotint engraving was the result of an every-day circumstance which attracted the attention of a soldier more thoughtful than his fellows. Ludwig von Sigen was a lieutenant-colonel in the army of the Landgrave of Hesse Cassel when he observed the corrosive action of moisture on the stock of a musket. The metal work had been ornamented with an engraved design, and the ground formed by corrosion in conjunction with the engraved lines suggested an idea from which von Sigen subsequently developed the mezzotint process. This story of von Sigen's discovery is regarded by some authorities with a suspicion of doubt, and a suggestion is made that his purpose was to invest this introduction of a new reproductive art with a romantic as well as an

artistic interest. In any case, the gallant colonel's credit is maintained, and it is interesting to note that the principle of his invention remains still unchanged. The chief purpose of later developments was to facilitate the production of a perfectly even ground.

On the presentation of his first print to the Landgrave of Hesse, von Sigen declared, "There is not a single engraver, or a single artist, who knows how this work is done." About twelve years afterwards the inventor divulged his secret to Prince Rupert, by whom it was brought to England. It is generally supposed that Prince Rupert carefully preserved the secret of this new process for some time, and then in a generous mood he imparted it to Vallerant Valliant, who fortunately for English art made his knowledge widespread.

When mezzotint engraving was first introduced into England, the famous artists, Reynolds and Gainsborough, had reached the summit of their fame. The time was indeed auspicious. Line engraving failed to give a faithful reproduction of the peculiar style of painting then so much admired, while mezzotint engraving, with its soft gradations and attractive qualities of expression, translated with a vivacity and facility that could not fail to please and satisfy.

Then, again, a somewhat abrupt change manifested itself in the pictorial art of this period. Representations of incidents and portraits of famous personages, which were in themselves interesting,

took the place of the severely artistic productions of the past. The natural result was an intense interest, which embraced the art and the process by which it was popularised.

Description.—The mezzotint process of engraving may be described in a very few sentences.

The plate of metal is first covered with a ground or *tone.* To accomplish this, a tool with a serrated edge is passed over the surface in various directions. The myriads of microscopic indentations thus produced constitute a *tooth* or roughness similar to the grain of a coarse sandstone. This grain holds a certain proportion of printing ink, and gives a rich, velvety black impression. On such a ground the engraver works up his design, and, by the skilful use of scraper and burnisher, obtains a series of tones or almost imperceptible gradations. He removes just so much of the grain as may be required for the lighter tones, and by burnishing or polishing, after the scraper has been used, secures the high lights. In one respect, at least, this form of reproductive art is peculiar, and unlike any other types of engraving. The artist works from black to white, and produces, on the plate, the lights instead of the shadows.

Artistic Qualities.—Although capable of most charming effects, the mezzotint process never became a really serious menace to line engraving, with its firm and expressive outlines and peculiarly lustrous textures. Yet it is not at all surprising that a process, offering the artistic qualities of reproduction

which mezzotint possesses, should prove successful in the interpretation of such light and shade as, for example, Turner painted into his pictures. Turner was engaged upon the series of pictures for his *Liber Studiorum* when he suddenly realised the value of mezzotint engraving. He consulted with Charles Turner, an eminent engraver, who afterwards executed twenty-three of the *Liber Studiorum* plates, and eventually decided to adopt a combination of etching with mezzotint for the reproduction of that famous series of pictures. The leading or essential lines of each picture were etched, probably by Turner himself, and the mezzotint added by other engravers.

It is perhaps to some extent true that prints from mezzo plates lack somewhat in dignity of effect and fidelity of representation. They are suggestive rather than representative; yet, when the character of the work is suitable, this lack of dignity is more than compensated for by the soft and harmonious effects of light and shade already referred to. The peculiar beauty and brilliancy of these effects, when artistically rendered, impart to the prints an alluring charm, which appeals to the inartistic as well as the accredited artistic eye.

The fact that Sir Joshua Reynolds, West, Romney, and other famous artists allowed their paintings to be reproduced by the mezzotint process, is sufficient proof of their appreciation of its power. It was, as already stated, to English engravers that mezzo engraving owed its development and fame as

a reproductive art, and for very many years after its invention it was practised chiefly in England and Holland. It is a remarkable fact that Germany, the birthplace of this art, had but a slight connection with its subsequent history; and equally remarkable that French engravers, who excelled in line engraving when mezzotint was at the zenith of its fame, should almost entirely neglect to appreciate its possibilities.

Another curious fact concerning mezzotint engraving is that it has ever been the art of the dilettanti. It was first of all invented by von Sigen, who followed the fine arts for pleasure rather than with any serious purpose. Prince Rupert brought it over to England with an enthusiastic, but certainly not a professional, interest, and at several periods of its history it has received encouragement and substantial help from like sources. One of the earliest and most ardent mezzo engravers in this country was Francis Place, a well-known Yorkshire country squire. H. Lutterel was another such exponent of the art. He was the first engraver to make any decided improvement in laying the ground. He evidently realised the importance of a good ground, and constructed a tool to ensure its evenness and regularity. Another Irishman, Captain Baillie, a retired cavalry officer, adopted a style of engraving similar to Rembrandt's, and copied some of that great artist's productions. He was one of the most enlightened art critics of his time.

A Modern Mezzo Engraver.—A brief outline

sketch of the life of Samuel Cousins, one of the most successful of modern mezzotint engravers, will form a fitting conclusion to this chapter.

Samuel Cousins was born in 1800. The story of his precociousness in artistic matters is certainly extraordinary. Sir Thomas Ackland, an enthusiastic patron of the fine arts, saw the boy Cousins standing before a picture dealer's window, and sketching with all the eagerness and verve of a born artist. Even while yet a child of eleven years his exceptional ability manifested itself, for he won the silver palette, presented by the Society of Arts, and again the silver medal when twelve years. His rapid progress, both as an artist and engraver, was undoubtedly due to the influence and encouragement of his patron and friend, Sir Thomas Ackland. He engraved about two hundred plates, including pictures by Reynolds, Lawrence, Landseer, and Millais. Cousins died in 1887, after a most brilliant and purposeful career.

CHAPTER VI

THE ENGRAVER'S TASK—INARTISTIC WORK—CONSTRUCTIVE ELEMENTS—OUTLINE—EXTRANEOUS MATTER—COMPOSITION—LIGHT AND SHADE—EXPRESSION—PERSPECTIVE—EXECUTION

"The highest art is undoubtedly that which is simplest and most perfect, which gives the experience of a lifetime by a few lines and touches."

The Engraver's Task.—Engraving, by whatever process it may be accomplished, is not by any means a secondary art. Even when it descends to mere copying, which its commercial associations unfortunately encourage, it requires for its effective execution exceptional skill, unremitting patience, and a more than average degree of artistic feeling. It is almost impossible to appreciate the true value of the engraver's work without some consideration of the labour it entails. Each one of the multitudinous lines of an engraving is cut with a definite purpose and deliberate care, and may be operated upon again and again to increase the depth or width in various places. Even the dots of a stipple are not made in that aimless fashion which their appearance might at first suggest. A mechanical

effect is sedulously avoided, consequently each dot must be cut with scrupulous care, and may require two or three touches with the graver to produce the desired effect. The proportionate reduction of pictures for engraving also demands exquisite skill and accurate draughtsmanship in which the eye and hand of the artist may be distinctly traced.

Thus, by a laborious yet picturesque and harmonious interpretation of the artist's creations, the engraver renders their reproduction possible, widens the sphere of their interest and influence, and in many instances procures for them a world-wide reputation.

Such an art may be both erudite and comprehensive in its information, for it is executed with a purposeful patience which omits nothing, forgets nothing, and maintains a convincing directness of expression.

Outline, light and shade, variety of style and representation of surfaces, are all within the engraver's control, and a vast diversity of expression will be requisite for their realisation. It is quite within his power also to interpret the artist's thoughts as well as imitate his style, and this involves not only a judicious balancing of tone and texture, but a knowledge of the principles of art embodied in the picture—his copy.

Inartistic Work.—Owing to an insatiable craving for pictorial illustration, there is an ever-growing tendency on the part of the artist engraver to seek after sensational or entertaining effects which are

not artistic productions. Intensely interesting and attractive they may be, and yet signally deficient in the true elements of fine art. It is quite possible to make any art popular, however crude its conception and manifestation may be, so long as its expression is sufficiently striking or pleasing. Such products of the graver or brush may be elaborate compositions and effective forms of pictorial expression, inasmuch as they provide interesting information concerning past or current events. They may even possess a certain value as historical records, and yet not manifest that subtle power of suggestive beauty and intensity of thought which are *primâ facie* evidences of masterly genius and artistic power. When the energy and skill of the artist are thus devoted to expressive delineation in place of artistic completeness, he becomes satisfied with an inferior degree of excellence, provided only that it pleases; and the result will almost assuredly be an incomplete, if not vitiated, production.

In these days of invention and advancement, when the resources of mankind are almost limitless, conditions of life favourable, and opportunities for the acquirement of knowledge and skill always abounding, there can surely be no valid excuse for this dead level mediocrity in the engraver's art, — a result which might possibly arise from the insiduous fever of display, of notoriety, and of commercialism which is ever seeking fresh victims in this as in every other phase of human life and effort.

Constructive Elements.—An engraving may be an imitative or representative interpretation of a picture or drawing in *black* and *white*. In such an interpretation, whatever its character may be, integrity of form is of paramount importance, and essential to the attainment of any degree of excellence in engraving. It imparts to the work a distinctive character, and endows it with that delicacy and precision of execution for which engraving is so justly famous.

Outline.—In the early engravings the constructive element consisted almost entirely of pure outline, which was rarely monotonous, but frequently suggestive of form and character. Is it not almost marvellous, this suggestive power of outline, for is it not in reality but an imaginary boundary? An actual outline is a thing unknown in nature, and the very fact that it has its existence only in the imagination of the artist makes our reconciliation to it and our admiration of it the more wonderful. The astonishing elasticity of the human imagination makes it quite easy to fill in the details of a picture if only the outline be sufficiently suggestive. The primary function of the outline is, of course, to represent; but its secondary or suggestive purpose is scarcely of less importance, and can only be fully realised when the imagination is so stimulated as to perceive more than is actually exhibited. The completeness and truthfulness of the outline must be an engraver's first point. An art critic once stated that "He had finished the picture who

had finished the outline." To some extent such a statement may be perfectly true; but just as in elocution, or even in ordinary conversation, emphasis is requisite, so in pictorial art the emphasis of concise expression, modulation, and delicate or vigorous accentuation are equally necessary and effective.

Extraneous Matter.—In other words, an artist's ideas may be decisively portrayed in outline, yet for lack of suitable extraneous matter appear both crude and impoverished. The amount of characteristic form expressed by constructive elements in the drawing, other than the outlines, is strikingly illustrated in old German portrait engravings. They are simply overflowing with details of the most minute description. Nor can such details be regarded as altogether superfluous, for they each help to *build up* the character of the picture. In portrait engraving a mere likeness may easily be portrayed by a simple outline. Not so, however, with character. Considerable amplification will be necessary to show that; and this, perhaps, is the most difficult task of the engraver—to introduce a satisfactory amount of essential detail without detracting in any way from a pleasing general effect in the picture.

Composition.—In its broadest sense composition in graphic art refers to the putting together or combination of the various details into a pleasing and effective picture. It may comprise—(1) the choice of a subject; (2) the most effective moment

of its representation; (3) the choice of such circumstantial matter as will best intensify the interest of the picture, and enhance its artistic value. Nor is one part much less important than another, for interest in the subject must necessarily be influenced by effective grouping, and the choice of harmonious surrounding for both. It is in this that the *finesse* of the artist becomes available, and, by clever contrasts and agreeable combinations, enables him to emphasise the expressive power of his pictorial art.

Light and Shade.—The importance of light and shade in the composition of a picture is a fact too well established to require much further recognition here. If skilfully arranged and distributed it may in some measure compensate for any lack of cohesion in the design, and thus become a redeeming feature in what would otherwise prove to be an ineffective composition.

It is chiefly by a dexterous arrangement of light and shade that the artist engraver can produce a faithful and intelligible translation of his subject. It adds considerably to the force and vigour of pictures, and produces effects which please the eye and successfully appeal to the imagination.

There are, of course, other qualities and conditions which materially affect the engraver and his work, and these will now be briefly indicated.

Expression.—"Expression is the representation of an object agreeably to its nature and character, and the use or office it is intended to have in the

work." It is, in fact, the very essence of a picture. Without it there can be no character, no emotion, and therefore no faithful delineation.

Perspective.—Linear perspective in engraving represents the position or magnitude of the lines or contour of objects portrayed, and suggests their diminution in proportion to their distance from the eye.

Aërial perspective, on the other hand, represents the diminution of colour value of each object as it recedes from the eye. It is, in reality, a degradation of tone, suggesting the relative distances of objects. Either may be the direct product of light and shade as well as of accurate drawing.

Execution.—The execution of an engraving admits of almost any degree of variety—the display of individual skill, and knowledge of technique. Execution, as the term implies, is the direct result of individual dexterity; the ability to interpret colour, tone, and texture of a picture by an arrangement of lines of varying depth and fineness; the ability also to imitate, or even create, pictorial expression.

The work of the engraver, like many other phases of reproductive art, is a fruitful source of mannerisms; yet even these will produce excellent results if they create innovations which will be afterwards approved and recognised as healthy, independent, and entirely original methods.

FIG. 4.—Modern Wood Engraving.

"An interpretation of tone and texture by an arrangement of lines."

Block supplied by the London Electrotype Agency Ltd., from the "Religious Tract Society."

CHAPTER VII

PHOTO "PROCESS" ENGRAVING — A PROGRESSIVE PROCESS—COMMERCIAL AND ARTISTIC FEATURES —"LINE" PROCESS—"HALF TONE"—ARTISTIC RESTORATION — TRI-CHROMATOGRAPHY — PHOTO-GRAVURE

"It is not knowledge itself which is power, but the ability to use and apply knowledge."

A Progressive Process.—Photo process engraving is a method of graphic reproduction which comes into direct contact with art in its most popular phases.

It is a distinctly progressive process which possesses immense advantages and represents an effective and by no means inartistic aspect of the graphic arts. The lavish, and in many instances extravagant, employment of process engraving for purposes of pictorial illustration is a substantial proof of its popularity and illustrative value. It may not always reach a high standard of artistic realisation, but it is almost invariably realistic and attractive in its varied forms of representation.

The idea of pictorial illustration, whether as the

translation of an artistic conception or an actual representation of current events, has ever been a fascinating one; and its evolution, from a photo-mechanical standpoint, has been one unbroken record of remarkable progress.

To enter upon a detailed exposition of any of the many photo-mechanical processes is somewhat beyond the purpose of this short treatise, and to attempt anything but a full and comprehensive description on such lines would be both unwise and valueless. Let it suffice, then, to indicate their more salient points, their illustrative and artistic value, and the manner in which they may be most successfully applied.

Commercial and Artistic Features. — The commercial advantages of photo-engraving may be summed up in a very few words:—

1. The plates can be produced quickly and economically.

2. The impressions can be made at a high rate of speed, and in some of the processes without perceptible deterioration.

3. The prints will be more or less facsimiles of the original.

From an artistic point of view, photo-engraving possesses equally important features. It translates the artist's work with extraordinary facility and accuracy, retaining a satisfactory proportion of its expressive feeling, and reproducing subtleties of drawing and texture which it would be difficult, if not quite impossible, to obtain by any other pro-

cess. Of the many photo-mechanical engraving processes, all of which are more or less associated with pictorial illustration, three at least merit further consideration.

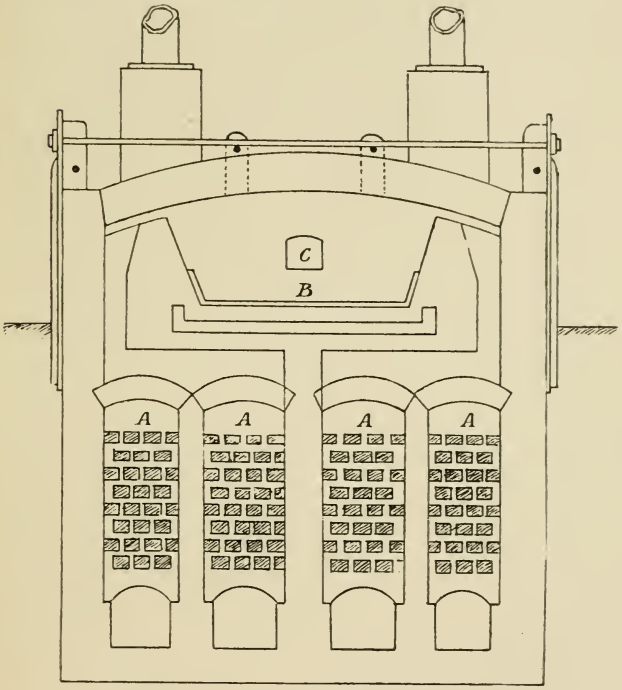

FIG. 5.—Cross Section of Cyanide Furnace.

(*a*) **The "Line" Process.**—The "line" process is applicable only to the reproduction of line drawings or prints, in which the design is represented

in simple black and white, with only such gradations of tone as may be suggested by lines or dots. For the reproduction of pen-and-ink drawings, it has found considerable favour with illustrators, and many even of the more conservative artists are compelled to appreciate its merits and acknowledge its value. An interesting account of the compulsory acceptance of process engraving by the famous illustrator "Du Maurier" is suggestive of at least one valuable peculiarity of this method of reproduction. Owing to failing sight, Du Maurier found it increasingly difficult to introduce into his drawings on the wood block that amount of detail which he considered necessary for the adequate expression of his ideas. Eventually he was compelled to make pen-and-ink drawings on a much larger scale than was his wont, and to have them reproduced as photo-line-blocks, the reduction being made as required.

(*b*) **Half Tone.**—"Half tone" process engraving, as distinguished from the "line" process, is the reproduction of a design or copy which has in its composition gradations of tone in the form of flat tints. Wash drawings and photographs present characteristic examples of such copies.

The true relative value of these medium or half tones can only be retained in the half tone engraving by breaking up the picture into most minute sections, and thereby producing a grain or series of dots of varying size and contiguity according to the requirements of the drawing. This grain or "screen" effect is produced by the interposition of

FIG. 6.—Process Engraving.

Block by the Arc Engraving Co. Ltd., London.

a network of finely ruled lines in the form of a screen between the lens and the sensitive plate when photographing. The optical principle involved is beyond the sphere of this work, but the effect produced is a matter of vital importance, and requires careful consideration.

The coarser the ruling of a screen, consistent of course with the class of work for which it is required, the more vigorous and consequently more effective the reproduction will appear. The variety of tones will be greater, and the textures will appear richer. Small prints are naturally subjected to a close inspection; the screen effect, therefore, should be less obtrusive than in larger ones. It may also be useful to know that a finely ruled screen will reproduce the minute details of a copy.

Artistic Restoration.—It is somewhat doubtful if the half tone engraving, pure and simple, would ever have any real artistic value for pictorial illustration but for some method of restoring those qualities which are so considerably reduced when copying a picture through the line screen. The pure half tone consists of a grain of varying gradations over the whole design. There are, therefore, no pure whites even in the highest lights. The use of the roulette and graver for accentuating light and shade is therefore not only permissible but decidedly advantageous, for the monotony of a mechanical grain is thereby relieved, and the print produced will be an effective and accurate translation of the artistic sketch.

"A true half tone will be best obtained by not relying entirely on the mechanical means, but assisting them with some hand work, either in the shape of re-etching or engraving, or both."

The application of hand engraving to photo-mechanical work has been chiefly due to American process workers, who applied the technique of the wood engraver's art to the amplification of their half tone blocks.

Tri-chromatography.—The "Three Colour Process" is more or less an application of half tone engraving to chromo-typography. The colours, each in their relative value, are produced by purely photo-mechanical methods—the colours of the original copy being dissected by means of specially prepared colour screens. Half tone blocks are made from each of the three negatives, and superimposed in accurate register in the subsequent printing, when, of course, the primary colours, red, blue, and yellow, are used.

The process possesses brilliant and effective illustrative power, offers ample scope for the ingenuity and manipulative skill of artist, engraver, and printer, and promises well-nigh unlimited possibilities as a medium of pictorial expression.

(*c*) **Photogravure.**—Photogravure may be very briefly described. It is a photo-mechanical process, in which rich, soft tones of surpassing delicacy and undeniably artistic effect are striking peculiarities. Unlike "line" and "half tone" engraving, it is an intaglio process, in which the printer as well as

the etcher must possess a profound artistic perception.

A polished copper plate is grained by dusting resin or asphalt powder on its surface, and afterwards fixing it by the application of heat. A *tissue* negative print is made, squeezed on to the grained plate, and developed in the usual way. The plate is etched through the tissue. The action of the etching mordant—perchloride of iron—being in exact proportion to the light and shade of the developed print.

The printing is a necessarily slow, and therefore costly, item. This limitation to their production, however, enhances the value of photogravure prints.

Ink Photo.—What is known as the ink photo process of reproduction is interesting chiefly on account of the remarkable fidelity with which engravings of the finest and most intricate texture can be reproduced by its agency. It is essentially a photo-mechanical process, but differs from others of a similar character, inasmuch as the vigour and expressive power of the original is to a considerable extent preserved. Colour values also, as far as they can be expressed by the engraver's art (see p. 11), are reproduced by ink photo methods with surprising accuracy, and the intensity of impression, that peculiar feature of prints from engraved plates, is almost invariably well sustained. A careful criticism of the appended illustration and frontispiece done, this process will reveal many other interesting points of practical value.

CHAPTER VIII

APPRECIATIVE CRITICISM — AN EDUCATIVE PRINCIPLE — AN ANALYSIS — REALISM IN ART — A RETROSPECT

"Yet when we have said all our fine things about the arts, we must end in a frank confession that the arts, as we know them, are but initial. He has conceived meanly of the resources of man who believes that the best age of production is past."

Appreciative Criticism.—The art of engraving, and particularly wood engraving, has fully justified its existence, and the eminently popular position which it has long held amongst the fine arts of the world. Through the medium of the pictorial press it has diffused a knowledge of the noblest principles of art, and has ever exerted a refining influence even over inartistic minds. For this reason the lack of knowledge concerning some of the essential qualities of engraving as a pictorial art is somewhat remarkable. Even more so when it is considered that never before in the history of the world has such a wealth of illustrative art been produced and brought well within the reach of its humblest patrons.

It is perhaps too much to expect, nor is it at all desirable, that individual preference should be moulded to one common and fixed standard. To some minds the picturesque, though perhaps undignified paintings of the old Dutch masters, would appeal with greater success than the wondrous light and shade of Turner's pictures. Or, again, the astonishing technicalities and intricacies of German wood engraving may stir up a deeper interest and enthusiasm than the simple yet expressive productions of Thomas Bewick. Yet such a difference of opinion may exist only in individual appreciation or taste. The appreciative faculties in mankind are in the main identical.

An Educative Principle.—There is in human life an omnipotent and omniscient educative principle which may, to some extent at least, be rendered subservient to the human will, but which in other respects is as certain in its results and impulses as the course of the planets.

Those who surround themselves with the beautiful in Nature and in Art, whose minds are constantly in communion with the grand and noble purposes they suggest, are infinitely more sensible to their manifold beauties than those of their fellows who persistently disregard, and even repel, artistic influences. Their appreciation of the full significance of any artistic production is deeper, more sincere, and more equable than is that of those who neglect the aspirations of the finer fibres of their beings, and thus allow their higher faculties to become blunted, and their

judgments warped. "Verily unto him that hath shall be given," etc.

The most independent and most penetrative imagination is not by any means a free agent. Environment, mental culture, and natural temperament are each controlling influences of variable power; yet there is much truth in the philosophy which declares that "It is as easy to excite the intellectual faculties as the limbs to useful action."

The Artist's Purpose.—A misconception of the artist's aim almost invariably leads to a condemnation of his work. First of all discover his purpose, and then decide upon the success or non-success of his conceptions. The *style* of their execution, *i.e.* the manner in which various surfaces and textures are reproduced, is but a means to an end. It is infinitely easier to assimilate a style once its objective has been clearly comprehended.

An Analysis.—For obvious reasons, then, an analysis of the merits and demerits of the engraver's art is not always a simple matter. His work may be an acceptable pictorial record, though not in any sense a picture from an artistic point of view. On the other hand, it may possess artistic qualities in abundance, and yet be far from a truthful record of an incident or scene.

Realism in Art.—It is frequently claimed for graphic art that when it cannot faithfully imitate it is permissible for it to interpret. Quite so; and it is in just such a light that engraving is or ought to be regarded. A picture, whether illus-

trating a story or recording an artistic impression, is never so great as when it enchants the imagination with an ideal presence. Absolute realism is not always desirable either in pictorial art or pictorial expression. No matter how realistic it may be, it is a doubtful gain to introduce into the composition of a picture a mass of detail which might only prove disconcerting, and distract attention from the main issues of the subject. The partial or complete isolation of a central idea often adds to the vigour and general effectiveness of the whole. Rarely, indeed, does it render it less picturesque. After all, it is not Nature so much as Nature's expression which should be represented. Its infinity of secondary effects, its superabundance of detail, may, often with advantage, be left out.

A Retrospect.—While in this critical mood, it may be worth while noting that the sincere and painstaking work of the old-time engravers is deserving of some praise and an ever tolerant criticism. It manifests incongruities and exaggerated metaphors which are at times painfully unconventional or grotesque, yet they have a directness of representation which admits of no doubt as to their meaning, and bear few traces of a perfunctory art.

"Our arts are happy hits. We are like the musician on the lake whose melody is sweeter than he knows, or like a traveller surprised by a mountain echo whose trivial word returns to him in romantic thunders."—EMERSON.

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